

regard to many of the themes it deals with, the sources that students of American history have accessible to them, and the kind of training they receive in our colleges and universities. These essays will, accordingly, serve the student as a practical, valid, and effective guide to the work he will be doing in both his advanced undergraduate and graduate courses.

But whatever distinctive features and concerns the study of American history presents, it also relates in many ways to the study of other fields of history. From the vantage ground of the American past, the historian may look out upon the contours of the whole study of the past. The anthology will help the student attain these larger perspectives.

5. The choice of a particular essay was made for one or more of several specific reasons. The essay deals with a central problem in the study and writing of American history. It is well written. It reflects a particular approach to the American past. In it an historian speaks on a subject within his special competence. The anthology is, in this way, meant to be a dialogue among contemporary writers of American history on several major problems of their craft. As a dialogue, the anthology inevitably contains viewpoints that often converge and no less often differ.

6. Because of very limited space, it has not been possible to include articles on all major problems with which the individual who studies the writing of American history will be concerned. The choices, moreover, have been governed by the unavailability, for a variety of reasons, of essays on particular subjects and problems. But the anthology, it should be noted again, is nowhere meant to be anything but a selection and an introduction.

The organization of the anthology and the subjects with which it is concerned were dictated not by any previous design, but rather by the essays that American historians, including some of the principal members of the gild, have been writing in recent years. These essays converge on several larger questions, and it is the answer to these questions which constitutes the subject matter of the respective sections of the anthology: a. What are the nature and uses of history? b. What is the historian's role in ascertaining historical truth? c. What has been the course of American historiography, in general, and what, in particular, has been the significance of the grand theses of Charles Austin Beard and Frederick Jackson Turner? d. How is the American past being rewritten by our own generation?

*THE CRAFT OF
AMERICAN HISTORY*

Volume I

THE CRAFT OF AMERICAN HISTORY

Selected Essays

EDITED BY
A. S. Eisenstadt

Volume I

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To the Memory of My Mother and Father

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A. S. E.

Introduction

This book is designed to serve as an introduction to its subject: the writing of American history, as it is practiced in the United States today. Containing thirty-three essays by many of our major historians, it is a handbook on the craft of American history by the master craftsmen themselves.

The anthology is meant to meet an obvious need, for there are all too few guides for those undertaking, either on the undergraduate or the graduate level, the study of writing American history. Those that do exist tend to deal more with the techniques of historical writing than with its nature; they are more concerned with form than with substance. Often lacking any organized or broad introduction to the subject, the student is left to learn the hard way, by a long and costly process of trial and error—as much error, in many instances, as trial. Learning the hard way frequently means not having an opportunity to learn well. This anthology seeks to assist the student in resolving these problems: it deals with the various aspects of American historical writing, substance no less than form, and premises no less than process; it helps to bring him into an early cognizance of the many questions that will confront him in his study and in his writing; and it opens up to him the possibilities and varieties which the study of the past affords.

In selecting the essays, the editor has been guided by a few basic rules. Stating these will further help to make clear just what the anthology is and what it purports to do.

1. Because the principal aim has been to introduce the student to the contemporary world of American historical writing, essays have been included that date from the period since World War II—the preponderance, indeed, from the past decade.

2. In making the selections, the editor has tapped the rich and diverse sources of our professional and semi-professional historical journals and of our journals of opinion and criticism. Here may be found our foremost historians, working out in the open, as it were, discoursing upon the central problems of their craft. The wide variety of periodicals represented in this volume is not readily available to the student. Precisely because of their availability, books dealing with the study and writing of American history have not been canvassed; such books, in fact, are generally concerned with a particular problem or theme, not with the subject as a whole. The following is a list of the journals from which the essays have been taken:

The American Archivist	Labor History
American Heritage	The Mississippi Valley Historical Review
The American Historical Review	The New England Quarterly
American Quarterly	Political Science Quarterly
Business History Review	The Saturday Review
The Centennial Review	The South Atlantic Quarterly
Commentary	Southwest Review
Diogenes	Vermont Quarterly
Foreign Affairs	The Virginia Quarterly Review
History and Theory	The Western Humanities Review
Iowa Journal of History	
The Journal of Modern History	
The Journal of Negro History	
The Journal of Social Issues	The Wisconsin Magazine of History

3. The anthology consists of complete essays, the editor having avoided presenting an essay either in part or out of context. Each essay thus stands as an independent and self-contained representation of its author's viewpoint. The footnotes accompanying the original essay have, for the sake of completeness and scholarship, also been reproduced. Obvious typographical errors have been corrected, but stylistic preferences have been retained.

4. With but a few exceptions, this book consists of essays by American historians discussing problems and themes of American history. The study of the American past is the largest single concern of our professional historians in the courses they teach and the histories they write. It merits individual and particular attention for this reason. The study of American history, moreover, presents its own distinct problems and characteristics in